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SUBJECT: GENEVA INITIATIVE ANNEXES SEEK TO RESTORE VISION
OF PEACE

¶1. (SBU) Summary. Since releasing its annexes last month, the Geneva Initiative (GI) is continuing to look for ways to promote its model peace agreement, the Geneva Accord, and to generally support peace efforts. Representatives of the Geneva Initiative told PolOff on October 6 that while they still maintain hope that the Geneva Accords can be accepted by the GOI and PA with only minor modifications, the main purpose of the Geneva Accord is to show that it is possible to reach a compromise between Israeli and Palestinian positions. They said the recently released annexes could serve as a resource for negotiators and, hopefully, as something concrete that could help restore a vision of peace for Israelis who have lost hope in the peace process. They noted that the Geneva Initiative has negative associations for many Israelis because of its strong identifications with the Israeli left, as well as many of the people who failed to reach an agreement at Camp David. However, they assert that almost every poll shows a majority of Israelis support the general parameters of the peace agreement. They added that while their side is made up of former officials, the Israelis should note that the Palestinian team is made up of current political officials, including PLO Executive Committee Secretary General Yasser Abbed Rabo, albeit in their private capacity. End summary.

Background

¶2. (U) The Geneva Accord is a track II model peace agreement signed in 2003 between former Israeli peace negotiators, most notably Yossi Beilin, and PLO representatives acting in their private capacity, led by PLO Executive Committee Secretary General Yasser Abed Rabbo. The annexes, officially released in a ceremony with President Shimon Peres on September 15, 2009, are a series of detailed technical agreements that were referenced in the original Geneva Accord but not previously completed. The annexes cover issues such as an international monitoring group, a multinational peacekeeping force, water, the environment, border arrangements, and arrangements for the Old City of Jerusalem as a jointly held area with a special regime for the holy sites. The annex on refugees has yet to be completed.

Israelis Experts Write the Annexes, Palestinians Approve

¶3. (U) There are 13 annexes that cover: the role of the international community, refugees, security, arrangements for Jerusalem, border crossings, Israeli corridors through the West Bank, Palestinian corridors between the West Bank and Gaza, water, the environment, and the economy. The final annex restates the Arab Peace Initiative (API) and says the Geneva Accord final status agreement fulfills Israel's responsibilities under the API with regards to the Palestinians, although it notes full API implementation depends on agreements with the Lebanese and Syrians as well. While the 2003 Geneva Accord laid out all the principles for a final status agreement, the annexes go into considerable

detail. This includes the specific mandate and exact equipment for international forces, the armaments allowed for security services in the non-militarized Palestinian State, the physical infrastructure for the Gaza link, and diagrams showing the layout and location of border crossings in Jerusalem. The full, 427-page annex document, as well as a summary document, can be found at www.geneva-accord.org/mainmenu/the-annexes.

14. (SBU) On October 6, PolOff discussed the annex project with Michal Radoshitzky, Director of Foreign Relations for Geneva Initiative (Israel) and Yuval Benziman, Coordinator for the Annex Project for Geneva Initiative (Israel). They explained that, in general, the annexes were drafted by Israeli academics and experts, approved by the Geneva Initiative (Israel) and then submitted to the Palestinian side for modifications and approval. The GI sought out the best experts possible, whether or not those experts supported the Geneva Initiative, in order to come up with solutions that they consider to be realistic and implementable. While Israelis did most of the drafting, they noted that the water and environment annexes were co-drafted with the Palestinians, and that the relevant PA agencies informally approved both those annexes before they were released.

PLO Officials Support GI "in their private capacity"

15. (SBU) Radoshitzky and Benziman pointed out the asymmetry in the make-up of the Geneva Initiative, as the Israeli side is made up of academics and former officials, while most of the Palestinians are either current officials or closely tied

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to Fatah, while acting in their "private capacity." Therefore, while the Israelis take most of the working-level burden, the finally approved results are more likely acceptable to the PA than to the GOI. In addition to the water and environment annexes, which were cleared by the relevant PA agencies, they said they were aware of the official Palestinian negotiating team getting a copy of the annexes in advance. While they are not sure if PA President Mahmoud Abbas was aware of the content of the annexes, they noted that GI Co-Architect Yasser Abed Rabbo is considered close to Abbas. The GI had planned a ceremony to officially present the annexes to Abbas following the Peres ceremony, but they think that the event is now on hold given the current political climate.

16. (SBU) On the other hand, Israeli officials, they lamented, tend to stay away from the Geneva Initiative, as it can be politically controversial in Israel. Radoshitzky added that they have done several polls that showed broad support among Israeli Jews for Geneva Initiative parameters, but when the poll question specifically mentions the Geneva Initiative, support plummets. President Peres officially accepted a copy of the annexes on September 15 from Geneva Initiative Co-Architect Yossi Beilin, but Peres has not officially endorsed the effort, and cannot as President. They pointed out, however, that the ceremony is a big contrast to the release of the original Geneva Accord in 2003 when, they said, they were called traitors by some Israelis. Now, the GI representatives pointed out, even the spokesperson of the Israeli Foreign Ministry publicly called the annexes a useful effort.

17. (SBU) In a separate conversation on October 8, Geneva Initiative (Israel) Chairman Boaz Karni told PolOff that as President, Peres cannot be involved in any track II peace efforts, but said that Peres speaks often with Beilin, who was a long-time Peres protege. Karni added that National Security Advisor Uzi Arad also personally requested a copy of the annexes, although he is certain that Arad does not support the Geneva Initiative in general.

Next Steps

¶18. (SBU) The GI plans to continue its public efforts to support their accords, and peace in general. They are currently translating the annexes, drafted in English, into Hebrew and will send copies to every Israeli MK. On September 1, the GI presented the annexes to the European Union in Brussels, adding that the Swiss Foreign Minister has been promoting the GI with her counterparts throughout Europe and beyond. The GI also presented a copy of the annexes to Egyptian Foreign Minister Aboul Gheit, who publicly called it "an important document that can form a good and useful base of reference." Benzimen added that although published, the annexes are a fluid document, and the GI will make revisions as needed based on feedback.

¶19. (SBU) The GI is also planning a billboard and print campaign in the near future to support peace efforts (Note: the GI launched a similar high-profile campaign following the Annapolis Conference. End Note). According to Radoshitzky, the organization originally intended to launch the campaign after the trilateral summit in New York to support renewed negotiations, but have now decided to hold off and revamp the campaign to fit the current circumstances.

¶10. (SBU) The GI is also continuing its other outreach efforts, which include holding conferences of experts, conducting West Bank barrier tours, and doing community outreach. Radoshitzky said that originally the GI, which is not a grass-roots organization, only wanted to focus on the details of the agreement to provide a recipe for a final status arrangement. However, the GI concluded that the biggest obstacle to peace was not the details of an agreement, for which there was generally broad support, but a lack of faith in the process, which normally manifests itself among Israelis as the idea that there is no Palestinian partner capable of delivering peace. Their community outreach program attempts to address this perception.

¶11. The two main efforts for the community outreach have been a program for Russian-Israelis, and a program for members of SHAS. They said that the SHAS outreach has gone very well, particularly the efforts with SHAS women, who tend to support peace as a principle and are open to learning about the details and meeting Palestinians. Radoshitzky pointed out that the granddaughter of SHAS spiritual leader Rabbi Ovadia Yosef has been active in the SHAS events with GI, and that the Rabbi's daughter said she will attend the

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next event. The GI representatives said that the Russian programs have been less successful, as the Russians tend to be more right-wing, and hold what the GI representatives claimed is a common Russian value that one never willingly gives up conquered land. Overall, they said, the GI will continue these and other efforts to help Israelis believe that peace is realistic and achievable.

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